IT body turns down CBSE proposal to have two main JEE examinations

Mumbai Mirror | Sep 20, 2013

Arita Sarkar

The IIT apex body on Tuesday turned down the CBSE's proposal of conducting two mains for the upcoming IIT Joint Entrance Examination (JEE).

The CBSE board, which conducts the JEE-Mains, had prepared a proposal for two main tests to be held in 2014, one in February and one in April.

The members of the apex body agreed that two exams would increase the amount of stress on the students who will also be taking their board exams in February.

"The exams have to be student-friendly. If the students are given a choice of two exams, then all of them will obviously take both of them" said one of the senior IIT officials.
While this decision will be welcomed by IIT aspirants, it will disappoint those who were hoping to get two attempts to get into engineering institutes such as National Institute of Technologies NITs and International Institute of Information Technology (IIITs).

"There is so much pressure to do well in just one paper. I think two exams would be better," said Nishad Bapat-Dhar from KC College, while speaking to Mirror.

Although the official announcement is yet to be made, the tentative date for the written exam in 2014 has been set for April 6. Maintaining the mixed format, the first of the two-tier format introduced this year, the JEE Mains will be conducted online on dates between April 8 and April 28.

IITs will take nearly 10 years to get to ideal teacher-student ratio

Hemali Chhapia, TNN Sep 18, 2013, 12.59AM IST

MUMBAI: Facing a faculty crunch, the Indian Institutes of Technology have projected that it will take the elite institutes close to a decade to get to the ideal teacher-student ratio. The government stipulates IITs must have a teacher-student ratio of 1:10, but at present, the ratio is an area of concern.
बुजेश सिंह

अब दिल्ली। आईआईटी संस्थानों में बीटेक के छात्र तीन साल की पढ़ाई के बाद चौथे साल में ही पीएचडी के लिए आवेदन कर सकते हैं। इस योजना के तहत केवल उन्हीं छात्रों को आवेदन का अवसर मिलेगा जो पिछले सेमेस्टर में बहुत अच्छे अंक लाए रहे हैं। ऐसे छात्रों को बीटेक को इकाई पूरी करने से पहले ही गेट परीक्षा देने की भी छूट प्रदान करने की अनुमति एनसीईआर से मांगी गई है।

आईआईटी काउंसिल ने काफी कठिन समस्या की सिफारिशों को ध्यान में रखते हुए आईआईटी के योजना के तहत छात्रों की संख्या बढ़ाने के लिए कइ कदम उठाने का फैसला किया है। आईआईटी काउंसिल ने सेंट्रल फॉर्ड टेकनिकल संस्थान के लिए आवेदन कर सकते हैं। पीएचडी में प्रवेश मिल जाने के बाद छात्रों को संचालित आईआईटी दाखिला दे सकते हैं। ऐसे छात्रों को एक से बीटेक को इकाई पूरी करने के लिए आवेदन कर सकते हैं।
IIT-B, Aussie Varsity Bridge the Great Divide

Students of IITB-Monash Research Academy working on cutting-edge projects relevant to Indian companies

HARI PULAKAT
BANGALORE

Late last year, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced a major doctoral fellowship scheme which pays students as much as ₹4.5 Lakh a month to pursue research in India. Six of these students were from a fledgling institution in Mumbai, a Section 25 company called IITB-Monash Research Academy. They are working on cutting-edge projects of interest to companies like Thermax, Piramal Life Sciences, Procter and Gamble and TCS.

IITB-Monash Research Academy was set up three-and-a-half years ago as a 50:50 partnership between IIT Bombay and Monash University in Australia. Monash University was the prime mover, led by its dean of engineering, Dr. Sridhar. One of the most influential academicians in Australia, IITB-Monash Research Academy is expected to work on areas of interest to Indian and Australian companies, bringing a developed country work culture to industry-academia relationships in India. "We want to bring this know-how into the academy," says Sridhar. The academy has 180 students working towards a PhD to be increased to 300 students by 2019. About 30% of them are supported by private companies, a figure that is set to touch 50% in the future. According to its officials, the academy students have already published 52 papers in top journals, of which 62% are in the highest-ranked ones. Private companies and industrial organisations in India and Australia have together committed to sponsoring well over 100 PhD students over the next four to five years. "Industry-academia partnerships do not work if you leave it to individuals," says Sridhar. "You need an engine room for partnerships.

Right from inception, IITB-Monash had tried unusual methods for an institution based in India. It tried to get the best people at the top. For its research council, it roped in Infosys co-founder NR Narayana Murthy as the chairman and former director general of the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research, RA Mashelkar, as vice-chairman. Murthy took a serious interest in the workings of the research council, and has attended 13 meetings out of a total of 16. The academy signed up several industrial partners, including Infosys, Reliance, TCS and JSW Steel in India. It gave high stipends and considerable freedom to students, with an eye on attracting the best.

It got a well-known academician as CEO. Mohan Krishnamoorthy, who was associate dean of engineering at Monash University. Krishnamoorthy encouraged students to take up challenging problems. "We focus on problems that need to be solved and not on those that can be solved," says Krishnamoorthy. Monash University was used to working regularly across intellectual disciplines and geographical borders, and had a sophisticated way of looking at industrial problems. The Western research ecosystem is a lot more evolved when compared to India," says Sridhar. "You need a synchrotron for studying biological structures, as the country has only one machine in a defence lab. Monash students can use the synchrotron next to its campus.

The students, the availability of facilities in Monash University is a big attraction, as they spend approximately nine months in the Australian campus near Melbourne, which is equipped with advanced equipment not easily available in India. For example, Indian students almost never get to use the synchrotron, invaluable for studying biological structures, as the country has only one machine in a defence lab. Monash students can use the synchrotron on campus.

Private companies normally do not support PhD work in India. In IITB-Monash, Piramal Life Sciences is supporting a student to study biological protein structures. Thermax supports a project to study energy transport fluids, and Reliance Life Sciences is supporting students to study alloys. All of them have important commercial applications. Access to or lack of research equipment is a common problem across all institutions in India. In IIT Bombay, where the academy students work, students have to give an application and wait for weeks. When the permission comes, many facilities are open only from 9 am to 5 pm. Things are much simpler in Australia, where the labs are available 24 hours a day and procedures are streamlined.

There are few distractions to work as well. It is no wonder that students and professors accomplish more in overseas campuses.
Cambridge univ-IITB to start second phase of partnership

Bhavya Dore
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MUMBAI: New ways of tackling infectious diseases and nano-science to help deal with neurological conditions and dementia – these are just some of the potential areas that the University of Cambridge and the Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay (IIT-B) are looking at working on as part of ‘phase two’ in their institutional partnership.

The two institutions signed an agreement in 2008, and are keen to further build on that, said Cambridge University vice-chancellor Leszek Borysiewicz, during a visit to the city on Thursday.

“We have a very successful programme. We are now thinking of developing the second phase of that programme – to be able to continue with exchanges but also to develop it around specific programmes of work, particularly how nanotechnology might interface with the health sector,” said Borysiewicz.

“[Earlier] a lot of it was looking at partnerships to start off with. Now we are looking at the details.”

Preempting questions on a potential India campus, given the developments in the bill for foreign universities, he re-emphasised this was not the agenda.

“A question I am always asked is with the relaxation of rules, would we be opening a campus, and the answer is no,” he said.

“But it’s not just India, we’re not opening overseas undergraduate campuses anywhere. That’s the direction that we’ve taken... We want to build our relationships around research and postgraduate agendas rather than compete with our partners for undergraduate students.”
Earth can sustain life for 1.8bn years
Planet Will Later Become Too Hot As Seas Will Evaporate, Say Experts

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

London: Scientists have concluded that Armageddon will arrive, but not for another 1.75 billion years.

Habitable conditions on earth will be possible at least till then, after which it will become impossible for life to exist on the blue planet. Earth will then become the ‘hot zone’ of the sun, with temperatures so high that the seas would evaporate causing ‘catastrophic and terminal extinction event for all life.’

Astrobiologists from the University of East Anglia in the UK have worked out the habitable lifetime of earth — based on our distance from the sun and temperatures at which it is possible for the planet to have liquid water. Scientists also concluded if humans would have to move to another planet, Mars would be the best bet. “It’s very close and will remain in the habitable zone until the end of the sun’s lifetime — six billion years from now,” the team said.

The study, published on Thursday, examined seven planets, including earth, to determine how their “habitable zones” will change as their stars get hotter and brighter over time. The key factors in determining a planet’s habitability are whether it is the correct distance from its star to have liquid surface water and a temperature less than 50°C.

Using recently discovered planets outside our solar system (exoplanets) as examples, they investigated the potential for these planets to host life. “We used the ‘habitable zone’ concept to make these estimates — this is the distance from a planet’s star at which temperatures are conducive to having liquid water on the surface,” said Andrew Rushby, from University of East Anglia’s school of environmental sciences. “We used stellar evolution models to estimate the end of a planet’s habitable lifetime by determining when it will no longer be in the habitable zone. We estimate that earth will cease to be habitable somewhere between 1.75 and 3.25 billion years from now. Of course conditions for humans will become impossible much sooner — and this is being accelerated by anthropogenic climate change. Humans would be in trouble with even a small increase in temperature, and near the end only microbes would be able to endure the heat.”

For the full report log on to www.timesofindia.com
Supreme Court upholds changed NET criteria

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court, on Thursday, upheld the policy of the University Grants Commission (UGC) for fixing eligibility criteria for candidates to qualify in the National Eligibility Test (NET), saying it is not “arbitrary and illegal.”

The Bench was hearing a petition of the UGC, challenging a Bombay High Court order setting aside the eligibility criteria fixed by the UGC after holding NET in June 2012. A single-judge Bench of the Kerala High Court and a Division Bench of the Bombay High Court set aside the criteria.

A Bench, headed by Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan, said courts shall not interfere in matters of education unless there was a violation of statutory provisions, and the UGC could lay down any qualifying criteria.

In March 2012, the UGC had called for applications for NET and, in its notification, prescribed the minimum marks for the general category as 40 per cent, 40 per cent and 50 per cent in papers 1, 2 and 3, respectively. Candidates belonging to the Other Backward Classes and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were given a relaxation of five per cent and 10 per cent, respectively.

Clause added

After the test, the UGC had added a clause prescribing 65 per cent aggregate marks in all three subjects for general candidates, 60 per cent for those belonging to Other Backward Classes and 55 per cent for candidates from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as the final qualifying criteria.

Candidates challenged the clause before the Kerala High Court and the Bombay High Court.

“We are of the view that in academic matters, unless there is a clear violation of statutory provisions, regulations or the notification issued, the courts shall keep their hands off since those issues fall within the domain of experts. The UGC, as an expert body, has been entrusted with the duty to take steps as it may think fit for the determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in the university. For attaining the said standards, it is open to the UGC to lay down any qualifying criteria which has a rational nexus to the object to be achieved...,” the Supreme Court Bench said.

“The UGC has only implemented the opinion of experts by laying down the qualifying criteria which cannot be considered as arbitrary, illegal or discriminatory or violative of Article 14 of the Constitution of India.” The Supreme Court, while upholding the UGC’s decision, said: “Prescribing the (final) qualifying criteria, in our view, does not amount to a change in the rule of the game as it was already premeditated in the notification. We are not inclined to say that the UGC has acted arbitrarily or whimsically against the candidates.” — PTI
East, West Walk Together on Campus

The government’s recent move to allow foreign universities to establish campuses in India is seen as a major step towards enhancing research and opening up the domestic academic environment to the latest pedagogies and curriculum of the West even as global universities become more about a major emerging market economy.

The move could benefit millions of aspiring students who are expected to flock to India due to the lack of seats in colleges in their home states, which have a state of intent, opening up options for them to continue their education at world-class institutions.

Several of India’s top management and engineering institutions, including IIMs and IITs, have been exploring the possibility of starting their own campuses in India.

One of the main reasons for this is the high demand for skilled graduates in the country, especially in the fields of engineering and management.

The move is also expected to bring in foreign faculty members, who are known for their teaching and research expertise.

Institutions like IITs and IIMs have been in talks with foreign universities to set up joint campuses, which could provide students with the opportunity to study in a foreign country.

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